

ECLA/POS 70/7

Distribution: Restricted

Date: 24 March 1970

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
Office for the Caribbean



SOME AREAS FOR REGIONAL ACTION IN THE
FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

For circulation at the sixth conference of Heads of Government
of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

SOME AREAS FOR REGIONAL ACTION IN THE
FIELD OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

The Economic Commission for Latin America is happy to be associated with the increasing efforts by the governments of the Caribbean towards closer economic cooperation. The Commission, at the same time, is equally concerned with the social aspects of economic growth ^{1/} and change in the integration context and strongly believes that concerted, coordinated regional action can make important contributions to various aspects of social overhead capital like education, health, productivity, youth development etc., and to human resources development ^{2/} in its widest sense. This brief paper seeks to outline some suggested areas for such regional approach and action.

II

The paper proceeds from the general assumption that economic development is not an end in itself but a means of fulfilling social and political aims and that economic objectives stem from social and political aspirations of the peoples and their governments. Specifically in the current Caribbean situation, it is taken that, though the more immediate aims of the recent steps towards greater regional economic cooperation are market expansion, gainful diversification of trading patterns and strengthening the economic systems of the territories,

^{1/} Indeed, the role visualized for the ECLA by the Executive Secretary in the *Second Development Decade* lays very considerable stress on concentrated attention on studies of the problems of economic development "through criteria of a social character".

^{2/} Human Resources Development connotes in economic terms "the accumulation of human capital and its effective investment in the development of the economy"; in political terms, preparation of the people "for adult participation in political processes"; and from the social and cultural standpoints assistance to people "to lead fuller and richer lives, less bound by tradition". See Harbison and Myers, Education, Manpower and Economic Growth: Strategies of Human Resource Development. McGraw and Hill Series in International Development, New York, 1964

the ultimate objectives of the process of economic integration are to provide higher standards of consumption, education and overall levels of living for the people, to achieve a gradual reorientation of values, ideas and approaches geared to the needs and realities of the region and thus to evolve fresh Caribbean perspectives for overall Caribbean development. This is particularly significant in the light of the fact - which is not stressed frequently and strongly enough - that export oriented economies created under colonial rule, have developed patterns of skill-diffusion, income-distribution, consumption and value-orientation which act as discords to development.

Though the importance of fundamental and long term social aspects of development and the need for harmonization of planning in the 'economic' and 'non-economic' fields is generally recognized in the various countries in the region, strategies in economic planning still lay an almost exclusive stress on economic indicators like markets and process, savings, investment and output. There is, no doubt, a clear recognition of the inadequacy of techniques of planning for development focussed mainly on allocation of resources to realise quantified and readily quantifiable objectives; but, not all planners have got over an instinctive feeling that "what cannot be measured cannot exist". The view seems to linger in some quarters that intensive action in the 'social field' could be postponed till a reasonable rate of economic growth has been attained. More importantly, there is a lack of appreciation of the fact that in a developing situation, the social system and the institutional pattern are not always readily permissive of economic development. Indeed, social factors may well inhibit and obstruct the processes of economic development. Measures for the restructuring of the economy not only create in their wake new sets of social problems but also change the form and characteristics of existing ones. In the present Caribbean context, the process of 'de-fossilization' of the production pattern in the export sector and of transition of agriculture from the traditional to the modern phase will engender far reaching changes in the fields of specialization of roles, community organizations, mobility of labour, labour relations and local institutional structure. Measures for industrialization would carry with them both occupational and geographical shifts. Planning as a

continuous process of organized, rational and directed decision-making should encompass in its perspective the degrees of disturbance of both social and economic transition. Problems and prospects in this behalf are Caribbean ones and not merely national ones. A regional framework of social policy is thus clearly indicated.

Though an overall regional policy for human resources development is yet to be evolved, the development plans of the area governments do contain statements of social objectives. But the social policy objectives have not been spelt out in detail as those of economic policy have been. Development is, no doubt, a composite, single phenomenon, which cannot be divided strictly into 'economic' and 'social' sectors; but, at the stage of policy formulation, it is necessary to specify social objectives (like raising the levels of living of the people, providing for a more equitable distribution of incomes and services and widening opportunities for greater social mobility and popular participation) as distinct from purely economic goals. Also, within the 'social field', the objectives of action in each sector (like education, health and housing) should be so visualized and formulated as to reflect fully its inter-relationship with other sectors and to indicate its place and purpose in the total development process. Policy instruments to achieve the broad social goals such as fiscal policy, wage legislation, population and employment policies, measures relating to prices of consumer goods and services, social security and welfare legislation should be enumerated, too.

It is important in this connection to note that social development programmes should not be regarded as a rescue operation or a counteracting measure. Such a therapeutic view cannot produce, much less sustain, a wholesome social advance. A policy for social development should reflect a well-conceived, inter-sectoral coordination and should be based on dynamic conceptions consciously designed for continuous changes in content. The policy may be regarded as an instrument to create, at the outset, a wholesome climate for human resources development. To achieve this, it should take note of the differences in levels of perception, aspirations, interests and patterns of values and behaviour of the various strata of society and the consequent variations in their reactions to different development goals, strategies and plans. The policy should also be

related to the characteristics and processes of change of the national societies.

III

A conscious, deliberate, integrated policy for human resources development for the region as a whole with coherent objectives and valid criteria for priorities can be evolved only overtime, considering its scope and complexity; meanwhile, however, certain areas for regional action can be identified. Some of them are outlined below.

Manpower Development and Utilization

Coordinated action on the regional plane could be very useful and effected in seeking short-term solutions to the problems of utilization of available manpower and inadequacy of skilled and trained manpower. Action in this regard should have particular focus on youth who constitute at once a resource and objective of development. It is important that the approach should not be problem-centred but should have a positive resources development orientation. The following measures are suggested:

- 1) The countries in the region with big private firms and establishments may devise a scheme of in-plant or on-the-job placement and training in which youth from all the territories may be allowed to participate. The governments concerned should encourage and persuade establishments to draw up a formal plan for such a scheme and to develop training methods and techniques that will shorten the time required for the development of skills and experience. It may be necessary to evolve precise legal definitions of the aims and methods of the scheme lest it should result in a system of mere "cut-rate employment".^{3/}
- 2) The development of a Caribbean Volunteer Youth Corps, the members of which could be assigned to the various countries in the region to participate and assist in diverse development projects may be considered.

^{3/} See Youth and Work in Latin America, a paper presented by the ILO for the Latin American Conference on Child and Youth in National Development, Santiago, Chile, 1965.

It is a welcome feature that already ten youth from Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, who had been trained in the youth camps of their countries, are now acting as camp counsellors in the recently established sub-regional youth camp in Dominica. The results of this pilot venture are extremely encouraging and gratifying. It is suggested that as the next step from this modest and ad hoc beginning, an organized and institutionalized scheme of a Caribbean Voluntary Youth Corps be initiated. This will help instil in the youth a sense of purposiveness, identification and a militant faith in the future and will be a valuable asset to the process of human resources development in the region, since the process of drawing youth into the mainstream of development implies a true commitment to development, transcending the bounds of mere 'functional adaptation', in the sense of acquisition of required skills and techniques.

3) Considering the shortage of manpower adequately trained in fields like managerial skills, statistics, economic and social planning etc., in the relatively less developed countries in the region, visits of such persons to their counterparts in the relatively more developed territories may be arranged.

4) One or two regional institutions may be established to impart short-term training to youths in the basic elements of selected trades and occupations, designed to increase their capacity for self-employment, preferably on cooperative lines. ^{4/} The course may, therefore, include a brief introduction to the principles and practice of cooperation.

5) A regional scheme for the collection of manpower statistics and conduct of special studies and research in the field, including the evaluation of the economic and social forces that relate to the

^{4/} There appears to be a good scope for the promotion of poultry and fisheries cooperatives, run on modern lines.

employment process may be launched.

6) Studies on the various types of intermediate technologies which will suit the Caribbean conditions, may be conducted at the regional level.

7) It is also for consideration whether it will be useful to constitute a ministerial level regional manpower advisory committee to advise the heads of governments on all aspects of development, utilization and distribution of manpower required to achieve the goals of overall development.

Housing

Spiralling construction costs inhibit the pace of development in the housing field in all the Caribbean countries. Studies may be initiated, on the regional plane, which will help the area governments to:

- (i) Give a practical approach for increasing intra-regional trade in building products;
- (ii) promote national housing programmes that could utilize to the maximum extent regionally produced housing materials;
- (iii) coordinate at the regional level those aspects of national programmes which can be carried out jointly; and
- (iv) promote exchange of information and technical^{5/} experience among the countries of the region^{5/}

Some Institutional Aspects

It is evident that promotion of development-aiding institutions is central to the success of efforts towards overall advance. Both the

^{5/} See Ortega and Selvanayagam, Report on Some Aspects of Low Cost Housing for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, University of the West Indies, 1969, p. 64.

Workshops on Community Development and Local Government held in 1968 and on Integrated Rural Development held in 1969 ^{6/} have stressed the importance of reorganizing the structure of the local government institutions and strengthening them functionally and financially and involving them fully in the development process. No doubt, decisions on aspects like range of functions to be devoted on local authorities and delimitations of areas are to be based on the conditions obtaining in the individual territories, but it is felt that it would be useful for all the area governments to adopt a basic policy framework on the role of local governments in the process of development.

Equally important is the reform of those practices institutionalized by wont and even by legal provisions, which hamper development. The most important case in point is the inhibitive land tenure and other agrarian systems in the different territories. Here again, it is for consideration whether it would not be desirable to have a common basic policy regarding measures like tenurial reform, consolidation of holdings and the like.

Some Important Fields of Study

The various mass-media can be effectively and purposively used to effect a reorientation of the values and ideas of the people geared to the economic and social realities of the region. Such a revaluation is particularly called for in the sphere of the local consumer pattern, which is based on that of high-income countries without reference to local development needs and priorities. In this connection, special comment is called for on the rapidly increasing family ownership of television sets ^{7/}. Most of the programmes are foreign-produced and the powerful effects of television as an advertisement medium are wellknown. Given the present programmes and advertisement content, they cannot but result in a reinforcement of the orientation of the local population to the consumer and behaviour pattern of the industrialised, more affluent societies.

^{6/} See Reports of the Workshops, E/CN.12/846 and E/CN.12/847.

^{7/} In 1967 there were 36 to 20 television sets per thousand persons in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica respectively.

Source: United Nations Statistical Year Book 1968.

The social and cultural aspects of this merit systematic study.

Another area of investigation in the social field relates to the growth of tourism. This sector is doubtless very important to the economies of the Caribbean countries for most of whom it is a major source of foreign exchange earnings. In promoting tourism, however, the social and psychological aspects should be clearly kept in view. Unless adequate safeguards are taken like legislations for beach control, free access of nationals to all the beaches and beauty spots, etc., social problems of considerable magnitude and gravity would result. Studies on the regional plane of the social aspects of tourism may be undertaken on a basis of high priority.

The areas mentioned above are by no means exhaustive. The Economic Commission for Latin America, within its available resources, will be glad to be of assistance to the governments in identifying further areas for regional action in the field of human resources development, in working out details with regard to those they decide to act upon, and in conducting or collaborating with relevant action-oriented studies.

